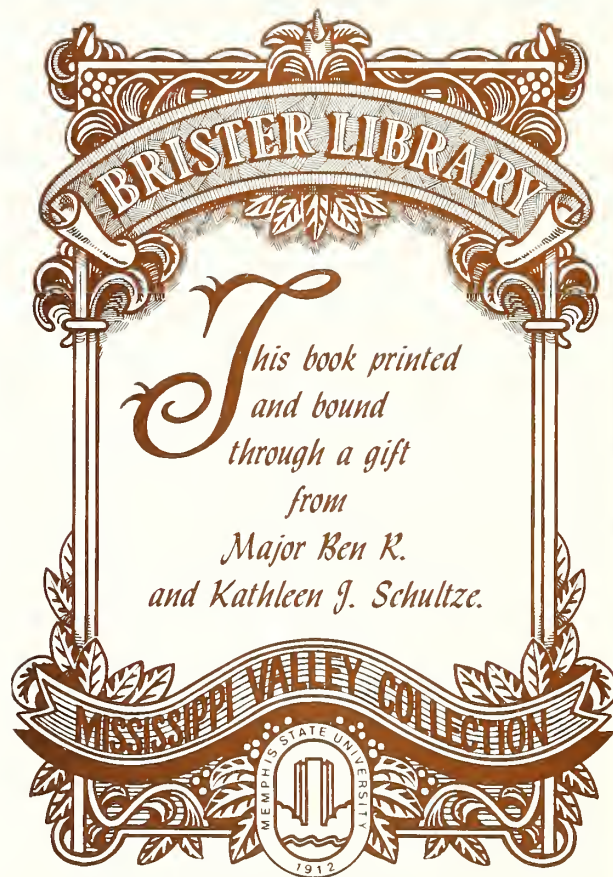


THE BUFORD PUSSEY PROJECT
INTERVIEW WITH MRS. HELEN PUSSEY

BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
UNIV. OF MEMPHIS MEMPHIS TENNESSEE



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"THE BUFORD PUSSEY PROJECT"
INTERVIEW WITH MRS. HELEN PUSSEY
AUGUST 8, 1978

BY
CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER: CAROL LANEY
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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Pusser

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

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PLACE Adamsville, Tennessee
DATE June 8, 1983.

x Helen Pusser
(INTERVIEWEE)

Charles W. Gandy
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
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PLACE Adamsville, Tennessee

DATE June 8, 1983.

Charles W. Crawford
(Interviewee)

Charles W. Crawford
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
of the John Willard Brister Library
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THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "THE BUFORD PUSSEY PROJECT". THE PLACE IS ADAMSVILLE, TENNESSEE. THE DATE IS AUGUST 8, 1978, AND THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MRS. HELEN PUSSEY. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE AT MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY, AND IS TRANSCRIBED BY MS. CAROL LANEY.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mrs. Pussey I'd like to start with something about you. Can you tell something about your early life and your family and childhood? What are the first things you remember and when were you born?

MRS. PUSSEY: Well, I was born September 6, 1908 in McNairy County, the northern part near Finger, Tennessee. That was the address.

DR. CRAWFORD: Finger, Tennessee, I've been there.

MRS. PUSSEY: Well it was out about four miles from Finger.

DR. CRAWFORD: What direction?

MRS. PUSSEY: East. On the Inville and Finger road.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was there a railroad that you crossed somewhere around there?

MRS. PUSSEY: Yes there is a railroad that goes through Finger.

DR. CRAWFORD: What road is that?

MRS. PUSSEY: It's M & O and IC goes from Jackson to Corinth.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's the Mobile and Ohio. What do you remember about the home when you were young?

MRS. PUSSEY: Well Mama always kept me at home close and



I thought I couldn't go anywhere and when I got old enough to go to school she'd start with me and I'd back out. So one day she whipped me and made me go and I went on and I found out I could go. From then I went on and I didn't have any trouble.

DR. CRAWFORD: How old were you then, about six?

MRS. PUSSER: Six years old. I remember that day she got aggravated at me. She said, "You're going today". She slapped me and grabbed me by the arm and carried me on to school and went in with me. She told the teacher to be easy with me. Henry Carruthers was my first teacher. He still lives in town here now.

DR. CRAWFORD: How old would he be now?

MRS. PUSSER: I guess he would have been about 18 then and I was six. He is eighty-two or eighty-three years old. He lives in town here now. She made me go to school and after that afternoon I was in a big way. When I got home I said, "I'm going to school every day, I want a whole fried chicken for dinner tomorrow."

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that at Finger?

MRS. PUSSER: No, it was Lane's Academy, Lane's schoolhouse, a one teacher school. It was about, I guess, 1914 or 1915. Just had two months in the summer and three in the winter back then.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was about 1914 when you started. Was the school fairly new then Mrs. Pusser?

MRS. PUSSER: No, my mother went to it but it had been moved to a different place, but it was the same name—Lane's. It had been moved over there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Lane's Academy?



MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh, Lane's Schoolhouse. Lane's Academy would be what it would be called, just a one teacher school.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you remember about it? What was it like?

MRS. PUSSER: I think you can learn more in a one teacher school than you can where you've got five grades, I mean where you've got eight grades just one teacher to a grade. Because back then you had to be quiet. If you didn't, you'd have to stay in your period, you know at school. Your break, in the morning and in the afternoon you had one and then at twelve. When you got up your lesson you had to sit still and you couldn't talk without permission. Hold up your hand for permission and if you talked too loud they'd make you stay in.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Mr. Carruthers was your first teacher?

MRS. PUSSER: He was my first school teacher. So that is the reason you can learn faster because you are sitting there and when you get through with your first grade then you know what your second is going to be. When you get through with your second you know what your third is. You've already got the third partly when you start it. And now in school kids don't know what they are going from grade to another. It takes about all year to get started.

DR. CRAWFORD: I can see how it might have been easier then.

MRS. PUSSER: Well, I remember I knew how to add and subtract before I got to arithmetic.

DR. CRAWFORD: From hearing the other children?

MRS. PUSSER: I'd see it on the board and watch the arithmetic lesson. I learned a lot of states and



capitals and learned a lot of history before I got to it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because you were there when the others were learning.

MRS. PUSSER: Yes, a kid is going to catch things that you don't think that they will, watching what is said. I can remember hearing talk about history classes and then on Friday afternoon we'd have a spelling match. We'd choose up sides. Now you talk about some people that could spell, they could spell back then. Get them up there against each other and see who could outspell.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that a Spelling Bee?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, they would choose up on two, big, long benches and go around and see who could get the most crosses. They would give out the word one time and you just got to listen at it one time. And if you weren't quiet enough to catch that word it might go around two or three times before anybody would catch what word it was to give out.

DR. CRAWFORD: And what happened to anyone who missed a word?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, it went on to the next one. It went plum around. One side with one another and then you turned the other side down you see. You went up there and crossed it with so many crosses they called it. That was very interesting. We had some good spelling back then.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did the school look like then?

MRS. PUSSER: It was a one room schoolhouse with a big, old stove sitting in the middle of it. A wood stove.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was the school brick or wood?

MRS. PUSSER: Wood.



DR. CRAWFORD: Not painted?

MRS. PUSSEY: No, it wasn't painted. Some window lights out.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you have any idea how many students were there?

MRS. PUSSEY: Well, sometimes we had about sixty.

DR. CRAWFORD: And one teacher! That's quite a lot.

MRS. PUSSEY: That one teacher kept all of them quieter.

You can go to a school now and you can't tell whether it's a school or not.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's true. How long did you meet?

It was not a nine-month school, was it?

MRS. PUSSEY: No, we would have about two months in the summer and three in the winter. About five months a year.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you start in the summer or in the winter?

MRS. PUSSEY: Started in the summer. I remember it must have been about 1918, Henry Carruthers taught another school and I was in the second grade. It was the last day of school and he just told me to take the rest of the book. I remember that. I have about six school teachers living in the county.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mrs. Pussey, how long did you go to school at the Academy?

MRS. PUSSEY: Well, I went there about until I was about seventeen and I went to school at Finger. There wasn't any other place to go and Finger was about to lose their high school and my uncle got me to come over there and stay at his house and I went over there and finished the ninth and tenth grade.

DR. CRAWFORD: At Finger?



MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was about four miles from home, wasn't it?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, about four miles.

DR. CRAWFORD: But it was too far to go back and forth so you stayed over there.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I stayed with my uncle. Then they started the school wagon back then before they got any busses and I rode it a lot until it got bad weather but I stayed with them.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the school wagon like?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, they had a covered top put over it like these covered wagons you see.

DR. CRAWFORD: Canvas or something?

MRS. PUSSER: Canvas covered, I couldn't think of the name.

DR. CRAWFORD: And would the students ride over into Finger on the wagon?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, they'd ride the wagon. They started it like that. They would have a seat in the wagon a long seat up and down the side.

DR. CRAWFORD: About how many students rode on that.

MRS. PUSSER: I guess it was about eight or ten. Some of them just carried their family and got paid some and a few others starting to school like that. My daddy started the first school bus to Mackey School when they tore up Lane Schoolhouse. They began to tear up the school and make two-teacher schools out of it.



DR. CRAWFORD: Was Mackey at Finger?

MRS. PUSSER: No, it was about two miles the other side of Lane Schoolhouse. It was about six miles from Finger. That was back when they started tearing up the school and making two-teacher schools and then from that they moved them all up into eight grade to schools. They'd have a teacher for each grade.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you finished school then in Finger?

MRS. PUSSER: No, I just finished the tenth grade and I got married.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year did you get married?

MRS. PUSSER: 1928.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was just before the depression.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I remember back in the twenties '24, I have a record from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. It says on there that everybody had a tin lizzie and a chicken in the pot. Back then that was high times like we have now.

DR. CRAWFORD: In the twenties.

MRS. PUSSER: In the twenties, '28. About 1930 is when it started.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now let's see, you were living at home until you got married in 1928?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you working then or were you just still in school?

MRS. PUSSER: I was still in school. Wasn't anywhere to get any jobs.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your name before you married?



MRS. PUSSER: Harris

DR. CRAWFORD: Helen Harris.

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you married Carl Pusser in 1928.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: What day of the year was it?

MRS. PUSSER: August 5, 1928.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was he doing then?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, he was farming.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was it his farm or his family's?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, he was living with his father and he had a certain part of the cotton crop, you know.

A certain part was his, they had that big farm down there where they all worked on it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that close to Finger?

MRS. PUSSER: No, that was in Chester County, close to Henderson. Down at what you call Halley's Store.

DR. CRAWFORD: How had you met Carl?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, I just met him out like at church, going where they would have these big singings and big meetings and places to go and all-day singings like they had back then.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of church was it.

MRS. PUSSER: It was Methodist church up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: They had all-day singings on some Sundays.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, they still have them. The third Sunday in July. They've been having it ever since they built the church there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now which church is this?



MRS. PUSSER: It is Maggie Jones Memorial, the name of it, but everybody called it New Church because somebody just named it that when they was building it because it was new. The church used to be over at what was called Plunk's graveyard, Andy's Chapel back over there. But it was away off of the road and they built it out on the road.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where is it located now, what road is it on?

MRS. PUSSER: On the Finger and Lickwood Road.

DR. CRAWFORD: It has been there a long time, hasn't it?

MRS. PUSSER: It has been there since about 1917, I think.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they called it New Church?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, that's the reason it goes by the name of New Church. Maggie Jones Memorial--this preacher's daughter that had it built up there--they named it in memory of her. She died and was buried over there at Plunk's graveyard. But they named the church in memory of her.

DR. CRAWFORD: How far away is Plunk's graveyard?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, it is in the northern part of the county. It's about a mile and a half across to the nearest road over there from the New Church.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now is that in McNairy County?

MRS. PUSSER: Yes, that is in McNairy County. That's where my grandfather and grandmother Hosmith are buried, my mother's people and I have a sister buried there that was older than I was. My grandparents on the Harris side are buried at Mt. Carmen. It is one of the oldest cemeteries in McNairy County. I guess the first white child

born in McNairy County is buried at Mt. Carmen.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is that a Methodist church?

MRS. PUSSER: No, I think it is Baptist church of some kind over there now. It was just an old log church house way back yonder, I haven't been over there in years.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you go to the church regularly, the new church, or were you just there for a special singing when you met Carl?

MRS. PUSSER: Oh, we always went regular. That's where my father and mother belonged to the church up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: And then you moved to Hardeman County to his place?

MRS. PUSSER: No, it's Chester County instead of Hardeman County. We lived in Chester County for a year and then we moved back up here and lived with my father a year. Then we lived up here in McNairy County then about the rest of our lives. We moved around different places. We lived up there close to New Church one year and we moved over here by Leapwood and lived there until about '41. No, we moved up there by New Church and then we moved over here close to Leapwood. That's where Buford was born. It was nearer Leapwood than Finger but the address was Finger to start out. And that was the reason that they always had it out that Buford was born in Finger, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: But really it was in between the two. What year was he born?

MRS. PUSSER: 1937. During the depression.

DR. CRAWFORD: What day of the year?

MRS. PUSSER: December the 12th.



DR. CRAWFORD: And let's see, you had lived for a while in Chester County but not very long, had you?

MRS. PUSSER: No, we lived about a year up there I guess.

DR. CRAWFORD: About '28 to '29 and then you moved back to McNairy County.

MRS. PUSSER: I think that's about right.

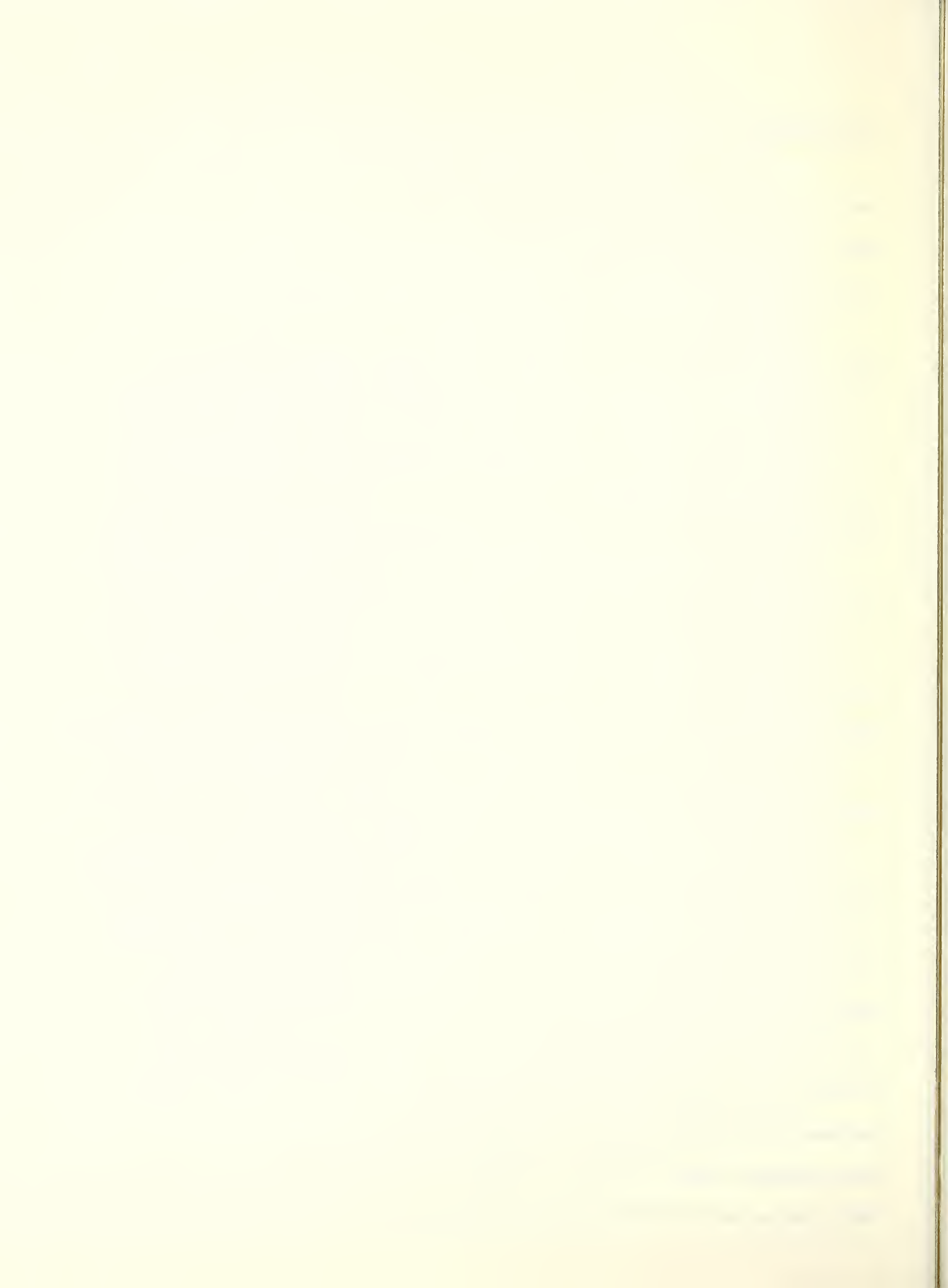
DR. CRAWFORD: What do you remember about living on the farm just after you got married? What did you do, did you help with the crops?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, I had lived on the farm all of my life until 1947 when I went to work at the factory.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were used to doing the things you had to then, weren't you? There wasn't anything for you to do.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah. People then had to go off to get a job somewhere if you weren't a schoolteacher or something like that. There weren't any factories around.

Buford was born in 1937 and then we moved from that place on to another place and lived there a year and went over there and lived with my father a year and I worked at Henderson along about '41, I think it was, and worked about ten months at the shirt factory. I had to go stay with my cousin. That was when Buford was five years old. That was the first factory work that I did and then we moved up to Leapwood. About a year after we moved up there I had to quit Henderson. They started a bus route around Leapwood and Hoss Bolton came around and I signed up that I would ride the bus so they could get hands to work at the factory. So I started working. I had to get up at 4:00 o'clock every morning and go milk and cook breakfast



on the wood stove and then walked a mile to Leapwood to catch the bus until they got enough to come down to the house.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they were getting enough people to ride the bus so they could have a bus. Now where was the factory?

MRS. PUSSER: Down here in Adamsville, what you call Garron's now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, Garron's that's on US Highway 64 now.

MRS. PUSSER: It was Adamsville Manufacturing then. They made slips.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was '41?

MRS. PUSSER: '47. It was in '47. I started in the winter and it was real cold, too. We had little gas heaters and we'd have to wear our overshoes all day and wear our coats up there sewing on those sewing machines.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Buford was about ten then, wasn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: Well he was about eight or nine years old, I guess then. Yeah, about ten that would have been right.

DR. CRAWFORD: '37 to '47.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he was about ten years old. When they got enough to go around by Innville and Mittiesville, see the bus would come right by the house and I would catch it down the road just like a school bus and come to work over here. And of course the factory has been built a lot bigger since then. It's just the middle part down here now was all there was.

DR. CRAWFORD: About how many people worked in it then?



MRS. PUSSER: I don't guess there was over a hundred and fifty. And there is over five hundred that works there now.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's growth. How many people would come in on your bus, was it a big one?

MRS. PUSSER: I guess we had twenty-five or thirty or forty. They'd pay fifty cents a day for rides.

DR. CRAWFORD: I guess you knew most of the people?

MRS. PUSSER: Yes, about all of them. We got forty cents an hour for work and made sixteen dollars a week.

DR. CRAWFORD: That would be about forty hours a week, wouldn't it?

MRS. PUSSER: Forty hours a week and sixteen dollars a week.

DR. CRAWFORD: In 1947.

MRS. PUSSER: Now if people don't make that much a day, they just think it's awful.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. Well, most people working now don't know what it was like.

MRS. PUSSER: Well, you know what steak was a pound back when it got up to fifty cents an hour? About ninety-five cents. Steak is not as high now according as it was then.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, not now with wages the way they are.

MRS. PUSSER: But people waste their money and spend it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was there a union there then?

MRS. PUSSER: No, there wasn't a union. There wasn't when I



first started but then they organized the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Then that factory went out and in '51 it was Myner Mills Company and a shirt factory. It went out of business in May so I was out of work from May to November.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now in November what opened there?

MRS. PUSSER: A shirt factory. See the slips closed and went out of business. That was out of New York. And then I went back and worked about a year and a month. Went back in '51 in December and I worked until January of '53 and got laid off and then I went over to Savannah and worked. I got laid off in '53. Anyway I went over to Savannah in April of '53 and I worked there until '57. Then Carl, my husband, got hurt in a car wreck and I stayed out a year there.

DR. CRAWFORD: When was Carl hurt in a car wreck?

MRS. PUSSER: That was in '57.

DR. CRAWFORD: What work was he doing then?

MRS. PUSSER: He was a police. And then he got over that. He had to stay in the hospital over there about five weeks at Campbell's Clinic. He came back and went back to work and he was going to have to have a hip operation done over and I didn't go back to work and I stayed out a little over a year. I got laid off over there in November and I didn't go back until after he had that second operation. I went up here to what's called Harwood now. It was Adamsville Manufacturing then. And that's where the union came in up there at that one. Garran's didn't have the Union.



DR. CRAWFORD:

What year would that have been?

MRS. PUSSER:

I went up there in '59. But the union came in in '56 while I was working in Savannah at Dillion's Manufacturing Company. I went to Savannah for five years and worked.

DR. CRAWFORD:

That was in the '50's, wasn't it you worked in Savannah?

MRS. PUSSER:

Uh huh. I worked from '53 to '57 in Savannah. Then I stayed out from November '57 till May of '59 and went to work up here at Adamsville Manufacturing. But it has gone out of business now. Harwood, and then I stayed there until I retired. So they had the Amalgamated Union up here. And after I went to work up there I joined the union in about a month. As quick as I was eligible and then I went to--was appointed Recording Secretary--before I went to a union meeting. A lady asked me if I would take it, she was quitting, and I got that and hadn't ever been to a union meeting and I didn't know how to do it.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Well you learned in a hurry, didn't you?

MRS. PUSSER:

Yeah. Then I kept that for about two years and then this lady quit the Financial secretary and insurance clerk and I took her job. I got it and I kept it until--well, I've still got it. When people want anything or call about sending off for insurance papers I talk to the lady. She called me a while ago. I retired in '74, but when they want to know I send direct in to the office. I mail the insurance in to them.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Well, was there any trouble getting the union started here?

MRS. PUSSER:

No, this man that was to run it, a fellow by



the name of Mr. Jacket, was not supposed to open a non-union shop. He had slipped off down here in Tennessee, I reckon, anyhow he came down here. He first hired people to do work for him I think--the Dillon Manufacturing did. But he got in this factory and bought it out and the union caught him. When they walked in on him, he either had to close it or go union. He got around and said--I was in Savannah but the other girls said that we had to join it or else be without a job. So he got up there and begged us, told us what benefits we'd have and everything to join the union.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well now that's unusual. Sometimes factory owners don't want people to join you know.

MRS. PUSSER: Well, he got caught and he was glad for them to because he didn't want them to close his factory.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you were the recording secretary.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I was for about two years and then I was financial secretary and insurance clerk too. I sent off for all of the insurance and kept up with all of them for all the meetings.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was quite a bit.

MRS. PUSSER: I had that job when Buford was Sheriff. And I took his financial secretary job over too.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year did you retire now?

MRS. PUSSER: I retired in '74.

DR. CRAWFORD: What plant were you working at then when you retired?

MRS. PUSSER: Harwood. They've changed the names of it every two or three years.



DR. CRAWFORD: Here in Adamsville.

MRS. PUSSER: In everywhere, in all of these factories.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you and Carl move to Adamsville?

MRS. PUSSER: In 1951.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do they change names so often in these factories?

MRS. PUSSER: Another company will buy it out. But Harwood has gone out now. It's not union up there. They're making seat covers. I forgot the name of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now let's see, you retired in 1974 from Harwood and you had moved here in. . .

MRS. PUSSER: '51.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you had been here about 23 years. When did Carl start working with the City Police?

MRS. PUSSER: He started working here about 1956.

DR. CRAWFORD: What had he done here before that?

MRS. PUSSER: He had been working on the Pipeline and he worked about a year over at Dillon's

DR. CRAWFORD: Where is Dillon's and what is it?

MRS. PUSSER: That's that manufacturing company where they made shirts I worked in Savannah. But he quit that and got a police job here in town. Then he was in that car wreck.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did the car wreck happen? Was that in '57?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. He had started over to his daddy's and met this other boy. He wasn't looking, he was in the middle of the road and he started dodging him, afraid they was going to hit head on and run out to one side. And turned him out from under



the steering wheel and just threw his hip out of place. It just give him hip trouble.

DR. CRAWFORD: He had trouble for a long time with that didn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, well it might have been if they had fixed it like they did mine, put that knob in there like they do now it wouldn't have been to do over. It didn't heal like it should. They had to go back and redo it and it still didn't do just right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he taken to Campbell's Clinic in Memphis the first time?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah to Campbell's Clinic. Dr. Calandruccia was the doctor. Then I retired in '74. I just had retired when Buford got killed.

DR. CRAWFORD: You retired in the summer.

MRS. PUSSER: I set my retirement the third day of March of '74 but I worked a few days after that. But I didn't quit until October 1.

DR. CRAWFORD: October of '74.

MRS. PUSSER: That's when I quit work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did you work longer?

MRS. PUSSER: Well you could back then. You could set your retirement date but you didn't have to quit work. You could retire and still keep working if you wanted to. But now I think they have changed. You have got to be quit a month.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did you miss the work after you retired?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I wish I could go back now.



DR. CRAWFORD: What do you miss about it?

MRS. PUSSER: I like to go in and sit down at the sewing machine and go to work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you enjoy the work or being with people there or what?

MRS. PUSSER: Just enjoyed the work and being with the people just like home.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'll bet you did get to know the same people pretty well after a number of years and they were friends.

MRS. PUSSER: Just like going to school. And you had to sew instead of get lessons.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you put in quite a few hours doing that.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I got twenty-five years retirement out of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well now let's see, when you first started Buford was five years old.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, when I first started.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about other children?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, I have a boy that was eight years older than Buford. He was born in 1929 and then my daughter was born in 1933. So she and Buford both was depression kids.

DR. CRAWFORD: But she was older than Buford too.

MRS. PUSSER: Four years. And the boy was eight years older than Buford.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where is he now?

MRS. PUSSER: He is over here at Henderson, Tennessee. He runs Big John Furniture Store.



DR. CRAWFORD: And where is she now?

MRS. PUSSER: Her address is in Collierville, Tennessee.
But it's right along 72 highway. She lives in Mississippi. But her address is Collierville. Seventy-two Highway on State Line I reckon you'd call it.

DR. CRAWFORD: They're both fairly close then, aren't they?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, pretty close.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's not very far away. Now when Buford was growing up if he was five when you started to work who took care of him when you were gone?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, that summer my mother did. But I didn't work but ten weeks. But then it was in '47 whenever I started at the factory he was going to school then. And he took care of himself when he got in from school.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you remember about him when he was a very small baby?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, he was just always quiet and liked to be by himself when he was little. And he didn't want to go to school. He said he couldn't read and write and it just wasn't a bit of use of it. He didn't know a thing.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was before he started?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: He didn't like to do things with other children much did he?

MRS. PUSSER: No, he liked to stay home and play by himself. Like trips off to a school would go. I know



they was going to Natchez Trace one time, Leapwood School. I said, "Buford, aren't you going?" And he said, "No, I feel it in my bones, I must stay at home today". He stayed there and played all day by himself.

DR. CRAWFORD: He liked to do that better then?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah. I know when he had the whooping cough, I kept him close that summer and I think he had the best time he ever had in his life, playing by himself.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year would that have been?

MRS. PUSSER: Well that was when he was about eight years old I guess, eight or nine. He used to like to get out and play with a chicken. He used to have pets and they would sit up on little trucks. He would sit down and play with them and they would sit down and just fall off. He'd pick them up and sit them back up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now they were the chickens that you kept?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I raised them in Mother Nature brooders. He'd get out and play with them and just laugh and have the biggest time with the chickens.

DR. CRAWFORD: With the little chickens.

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you remember about the day he was born?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, it was real cold weather the day he was born and we had to go about two or three miles up there to a telephone and go and call the doctor. It was about midnight and he was born about one o'clock. He was born just before the doctor got there. Went and got Daisy Garner, she came. And then Polly Fly came down there and then the doctor got there.



DR. CRAWFORD: Was Daisy Garner one of your neighbors?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. She was one of my neighbors.

DR. CRAWFORD: And the doctor got there soon afterward?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. Dr. N. A. Tucker.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did he come from?

MRS. PUSSER: Finger, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't realize Finger was ever large enough to have a doctor.

MRS. PUSSER: We used to have three doctors over there.

DR. CRAWFORD: My goodness, it used to be a good deal larger than it is now.

MRS. PUSSER: Yes it was. It wasn't any bigger but it had doctors back then. Every little town had doctors back then. Leapwood had two or three. It had two doctors, Dr. Davis and Dr. East years ago when I was a kid. Dr. Hodges just lived about two miles from Finger and Dr. Tucker and Dr. Barnes lived in Finger.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I didn't know you had that many there.

MRS. PUSSER: And there is two drug stores in Finger, too. When I was going to school at Finger they had two drug stores.

DR. CRAWFORD: There isn't much there, you know.

MRS. PUSSER: No, not much. The same old buildings are still there. The old drug stores. Dr. Tucker's drug store is the post office now. My brother's wife runs it now. That was Dr. Tucker's drug store.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of baby was Buford when he was very young.



MRS. PUSSER: Well he was a good-sized baby. He was always quiet and never did care much whether he played with other kids or not. But he would play with them and get tired but he would always be glad when they left when he would worry with them. He'd worry with them. He always had some smaller than him to play with all the time where we lived. And he liked older people.

DR. CRAWFORD: He liked older people better than children.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you suppose that was?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, I don't know unless he was the youngest and we lived by people that didn't have any children you know that was older. And he and my daughter would go down and visit and they'd have the biggest times together visiting those neighbors.

DR. CRAWFORD: So he didn't have children his age when he was growing up.

MRS. PUSSER: No, he didn't have any boys to play with his age right close, only just some that couldn't come more than once a week or ever two weeks. You know right close neighbors was all little girls younger than him until he was six years old.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he like to play with before he went away to school?

MRS. PUSSER: Just give him a little old truck or something and let him sit down and make a wagon and make it stall and couldn't hardly get up the hill.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he play inside or outside mainly?

MRS. PUSSER: He would get under the porch, a high porch. It had roads all under it.



DR. CRAWFORD: What size house, what place did you live
in then?

MRS. PUSSER: It was about a mile north of Leapwood, it was called the Jim Moore place. It had four rooms to it, a big, long front porch. It was built up high off the ground.

DR. CRAWFORD: It sounds like a good place to play.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah it was. It was a good place to play.

 Then when he started to school he dreaded it

but after he found out he could go he was O.K.

DR. CRAWFORD: All right now, this is the Gimmere place?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, Jim Moore place. J-I-M Jim Moore.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, I see a white building with a long porch and looks like a chimney on each end.

MRS. PUSSER: No, just one chimney and that is just a chimney flue, a heater to go in that room.

But there is another room on the other side. You can't see them.

DR. CRAWFORD: And a fireplace there.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, right here is the fireplace to the front room. And then there is an L-porch on the back but that's just the front. And he'd play up under that porch.

DR. CRAWFORD: The porch is high, I can see how he could
get up under it. That looks like, I guess
sort of a regular West Tennessee farm area. It is a little bit hilly there,
isn't it?



MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: What crops did you grow on the place?

MRS. PUSSER: Cotton and corn. And we had an old bird dog and it wasn't any good and he would go fishing by himself in a little, old pond or little, old hole down there in the ditch. I don't know what he would catch, there were no fish, not very big in there. Some of them asked him one day what good did it do him to take that dog with him that he wouldn't do nothing. He said that he watched the dog and when the dog would run he'd run.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was very young then, wasn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah he was young. He would watch his dog and if you knew the dog run from anything, there was something around and then he would take off.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was very thoughtful. Now let's see, was that where you were living when he started to school?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah we was living at that place when he started.

DR. CRAWFORD: And where did he start to school?

MRS. PUSSER: Well he went over to Harding Graveyard for about two or three weeks and then they would change back to Leapwood and he rode to Leapwood.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was the place he started first?

MRS. PUSSER: Hardin's Graveyard.

DR. CRAWFORD: Hardin's Graveyard.

MRS. PUSSER: Well, in the summer he went to Finger first before we moved back up there. He went over there about



a month.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course they had a divided term then.

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. This went on two months you see and then they turned out for about six or eight weeks and then we moved up there by Leapwood after he started to Hardin's Graveyard and then we decided we'd go on to Leapwood. The teacher was coming by and picked them up and they got to ride and didn't have to cross the ditch.

And the first bad thing Buford ever seen happen--he's run into more bad things all of his life--it was when he was about eight years old. One of the neighbor girls there drowned and he saw her.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now how did that happen?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, she was going to school at Hardin's Graveyard and her parents told her to go to her brothers when school was out. You know to go out there and stay if it was raining, not to come home across the field. She went out there and her brother was gone. She come home and she wouldn't go with the other little girl around the other way. It had just come a real hard rain there in just a little spot and all the ditches filled up. When she got to this ditch--she come by her sister's house and she was gone, she was over at her house--well when she got to the ditch the child must have thought she just had to cross it anyway. She just waded off in it, and it would have drowned a horse to have walked off in it then.

DR. CRAWFORD: There's a lot of water in them.

MRS. PUSSER: And it took her through two watergates down in a corn patch of ours where the ditches forked.



So it came up a rain that evening. Carl had had the wagon out logging or something and he come in and he went and put--it came up a quick cloud and he took the mules and--put them in the barn and took the gear off them. I had been laying around with the headache that afternoon and so we got up and ate supper and Buford and John Howard and Gaylia went down there to see about a whippoorwill's nest, close enough they could have seen the little girl if they had known what it was, you know, laying down there if they had thought to look. But of course there was water all over that patch, corn patch. And then after we ate supper Carl started to the barn and so this little girl's brother come in and went on over to his daddy's to the little girl's house, it was her brother. When he got to the ditch he seen she'd crossed it. And when he got on up to his daddy's house he hollowed and said, "Where's Clavy Ruth?" And they said, "Ain't she with you?" And he said, "No". He seen where her tracks went off in the ditch. And they all went to hunting her. Her brother and her brother-in-law was down there and Carl started to the barn and they hollowed at him and said, "Will you come here?" I seen him looking and stretching his neck and something had happened. Buford and John Howard followed him and they went off down there. I didn't know what it was at the start. And they asked him if they would come down there and pick her up. And he said, "Yes, where is she?" And they found her out in that hay patch. It took her 70 steps out in that hay patch before it dropped her. And Buford saw that. We brought her up to my house and washed her first and then he was upset over that and he wouldn't go back and fish no more that summer about that ditch.

DR. CRAWFORD: About how old was she?

MRS. PUSSER: Eight years old.

DR. CRAWFORD: How old would he have been then?



MRS. PUSSER: They was eight. They was just about the same age.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they were in school together?

MRS. PUSSER: No, she was going to Hardin's Graveyard and he was going to Leapwood.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they knew one another?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. They had played together when they was about three years old, when we lived over there, at that place before we moved back up yonder. I forgot to tell you about that. It didn't rain much at Leapwood that evening. Some of them heard that she had drowned and they said that it had not rained enough to drown anybody. It just rained in one little place and filled the ditches.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you remember about Buford's first day at school.

MRS. PUSSER: The days that he said he didn't want to go to school, he just couldn't read and write and he didn't know a thing and it wasn't a bit of use to go; let him wait until he was forty and he would go. Stay at home and play until he was forty.

DR. CRAWFORD: Until he was forty years old?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. And I said "Well, you can wait until your birthday and then you will have to go because you can't wait any longer you have to go when you are six." Well, the day he was six years old he got up and went on to school and that was the last of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was in December?

MRS. PUSSER: December the sixth. That made him have to go



to school then two years in the first grade.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because he went that year and then had to go back and finish it the next year around.

MRS. PUSSER: Well, he was afraid of trying to pass. He said he might better try it again for he didn't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did he like his first year in school.

MRS. PUSSER: He liked it all right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he have friends there?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he always had friends. He was always the leader. From a kid they would all follow him.

And then I kept him in school at Leapwood until he got to high school he was so backward, he wouldn't have never went. See the school would have been so big.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because there is quite a difference from Leapwood to Adamsville.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, back then that was the eight grade. And then grammar school and high school was all together in Adamsville then. I know he said to me one day, I guess he was about the eight grade he says, "I am so glad you started me to Adamsville when you did. I see kids at school I get so sorry for them I can't hardly stand it. They don't know where to go nor what to do. I try to help them all I can. I know how they feel. The first day I come to Adamsville, two or three days I liked to cried. I didn't know where to go to." And he was always seeing after kids then.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now what year was it that he came?

MRS. PUSSER: Over here when he was in about the sixth grade.



DR. CRAWFORD: Well it's lucky he came that early isn't it?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah. Then you see, other kids coming in and didn't know where to go he'd always watch them and help them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yeah, some of the others now would stay up there at Leapwood through the eight grade, wouldn't they?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah. Well now my daughter, it wouldn't have made any difference to her. You could send her anywhere, anytime.

DR. CRAWFORD: And she'd do all right?

MRS. PUSSER: It didn't make no difference. I could have sent her to New York, just throw her on the bus and she would have went on. But now you couldn't have done him that way.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did Buford do in school?

MRS. PUSSER: Just barely got by.

DR. CRAWFORD: At Leapwood?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, I mean at all of his schools just barely made it. But I know one of his teachers, Mr. Howell, he's from Indiana, he said to me one day. "If Buford would try a little harder he could do better in school." I said, "Well, he knows more than he lets on like he does. He is afraid he will tell too much. He's not going to tell only just barely enough to get by." He said, "Well, that's true too, but how he can make friends". He just shook his head. He said, "He can make friends."

DR. CRAWFORD: Well what grade was that?



MRS. PUSSER: That was when he was in high school because Mr. Howell was the teacher when he graduated. He had him four years. Max Howell, he's from Indiana. He's been gone, he left that year after Buford graduated I think. I believe he did.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did Buford like to do besides his class work while he was at Leapwood?

MRS. PUSSER: Come in and play.

DR. CRAWFORD: He liked that better than school. What did he play at?

MRS. PUSSER: Just get out by himself and play just anything, slingshot or playing with little cars, sit down.

DR. CRAWFORD: He didn't have other children to play with as a rule, did he?

MRS. PUSSER: No, he used to get out with Gaylia and run around and put on a dress and play like a little girl.

He always liked to wear a dress and get him on some high heel shoes. He always loved shoes. But he didn't want nobody to see him and he didn't want nobody to think he would do that. He wouldn't let nobody see him but he would have a big time like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was while you were at Leapwood?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah. See, if a bunch of little girls would come it would just tickle him to death.

And my daughter was right the opposite. When she would see a bunch of boys come it would tickle her. She'd rather get out and play with the boys and he would rather get out and play with girls. I reckon. John Howard was older. She followed him. And Buford was younger than her and he always had girls to follow. That made the difference.



DR. CRAWFORD: He had more girls to play with, didn't he?

He would have been about twelve when he first came to school at Adamsville wouldn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he would have been about twelve years old.

DR. CRAWFORD: Sixth grade.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah he was in eighth at fourteen. Yeah, that's right because he entered high school in '52.

Gaylia went out of high school at '52. And then he started in the fall in '52.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now she was about four years ahead.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, she was four years ahead of him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he have any difficulty going from grade school to high school?

MRS. PUSSER: No, he didn't have any difficulty. He knew more than he could but he just barely answered enough to get by on. But he learned by eye. If he ever seen you do anything he could do it. Now he went to work in the grocery store for Mr. Charlie Durin in '53, that was after school was out. No, it was in '52 after school was out. In '52 then he started in high school that fall. He went to work in that grocery store. Well, he worked there until a year and a half the last year and a half of school. He was a good ball player. He played football all the time but he never would play basketball. He come in one day, that was when he was in the ninth grade and says, "Well, I'll have my suit in a few days." Well he went on and he didn't get it. I said, "How come you not to get the suit". He says, "I decided to let the other boys have it if they wanted it." I reckon when he got to studying about it he told me a story and he come in one day and says, "Mother I'll just tell you the truth about the ball. I was afraid of "Chiz". That was Mr. Chisholm, the teacher.



He couldn't stand for you to rare at him and he was pretty rough on them and he wouldn't play ball. And he never did get him to play until that last year and a half in high school.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he played a little when he was younger?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah he played ball some. He was good at anything you put him at, he would be good at it, ball or anything. But he didn't care for it.

DR. CRAWFORD: About what year was that he decided he would not play?

MRS. PUSSER: That was his first year in high school. See Mr. "Chiz", he's still principal over here now. He was a ball coach then and he was the coach that come in that year and he just talked kind of short to them or was raring at them about something.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yeah, coaches do sometimes.

MRS. PUSSER: Well that's the way he did. Well now, Buford couldn't take it. So he wouldn't play.

DR. CRAWFORD: He wasn't used to it, was he?

MRS. PUSSER: He just couldn't take it off nobody that way.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did his daddy treat him, did his daddy ever yell at him?

MRS. PUSSER: His daddy would either yell at him or whip him. He knew that when he spoke to him he meant it.

But he always was closer to me. He was always strict on him.

DR. CRAWFORD: But he just didn't like Mr. Chisholm to yell at him.



MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he couldn't stand that. At the ballgame it would make him nervous. But he went on-- I know Mr. Chisholm said to Carl one day, "Why don't you get Buford to play ball? He's the best player I've got and he won't come out". It wasn't three weeks until he had him on the team.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did he do that?

MRS. PUSSER: He got around and talked to him and told him and got to bragging on him I guess and told him he was good and he needed him.

DR. CRAWFORD: I guess that was the way to do it.

MRS. PUSSER: That was the only way you got Buford to do anything. You couldn't get him to do anything just to volunteer. He was afraid he was pushing himself out on somebody. So he went on them, you see he had failed when he was in the eleventh grade. He failed on two subjects in March. And so Carl was in Winneward, Oklahoma working on the pipeline and I was working at the factory and he come in one day and he says, "Mother, I failed. If you will let me go out to Oklahoma and work on the pipeline, I guarantee you I will come back and graduate". I says, "Well I'll call Carl tonight." And told him what I said. And he says, "There's no use for me to go on, I've done failed anyway. And then I can come back". So he did. He went on and I went with him out there to Oklahoma, went and carried him out there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where in Oklahoma was that?

MRS. PUSSER: Winnewood.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were building a pipeline and Carl was working on it.



MRS. PUSSER: It come on from there to McAlester. Well he come on back and when school started then they talked him in a notion of playing ball. He had failed and see, he couldn't play until mid-term test unless he made up them two grades that he'd failed at mid-term test. Some of them told him to ask his Biology teacher and history if he couldn't outline it and hand it in. Well, they agreed to do it, so I outlined it for him and he handed it in. And he played ball.

DR. CRAWFORD: He got to play ball then that fall. Did he enjoy playing ball?

MRS. PUSSER: No, not too much. Because I know he said he would be so glad when the last game was played.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he not like about it?

MRS. PUSSER: He said they hollered and they yelled and then they tried to beat you to death when the game was over. The way he liked it, if you went out there to a ball game everybody went in and set down and been real quiet and played the game and when it was over get up and go home. That was the way he wanted everything.

DR. CRAWFORD: He didn't like confusion and a lot of noise, did he?

MRS. PUSSER: No, he wanted everything quiet. Always did. Well, I'm a lot like that myself. I don't care about all of that racket. Who needs all that hollering and yelling going on? One of them is going to beat anyway. What difference does it make? I told him one time, "Buford, don't kill yourself for a ball game. If you think you are getting too hot or don't feel like playing, just fall out and let them take you out on a stretcher". So it was about 1955 that hot summer I was working in Savannah then. I come home and he came in and he says, "Mother



I took you at your word today". I said, "What"? I thought I was getting too hot playing ball and I fell out".

DR. CRAWFORD: What did they do with him?

MRS. PUSSER: Well he said the football teacher--"Mr. Chiz" I think was the football teacher then--of course we got him aggravated before we left the school house and he made us run at the ball court over here from the school house. And said when we got over there he was going to make us run around that ball field about five times before we stopped. "I told the other boys I thought I was getting too hot and they said they was getting too hot". He told them, "Let's fall out". And they said, "If you will fall out, we will." He sent the word down the line and said, "When I hit the ground everyone of them hit it." And he said, "Here come the teacher just stomping and raring, 'Get up from there'." He said, "I've done all I can do, here's my suit." He said he just walked on off.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they didn't take the suit, did they?

MRS. PUSSER: No, he didn't take his suit. Well the teacher knew he didn't care whether he played or not. He just as soon to hand that suit in as not. He wouldn't have cared one bit to have handed that suit in.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, tell me about his work on the pipeline in Oklahoma. What time of the year was it that you took him out there?

MRS. PUSSER: In March and then worked until July when school started.

DR. CRAWFORD: And then he came back for the start of summer school.

MRS. PUSSER: Bruce Ham, that was one of his friends that was



about two years ahead of him in school and worked with him until school started.

DR. CRAWFORD: They could make some money that way, couldn't they?

MRS. PUSSER: He made some money and it was a good trip for him out there.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think work like that is educational.

MRS. PUSSER: He took up with a little boy out there that was an Indian boy who liked him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he ever see him again?

MRS. PUSSER: He went back to see him after that when he was working in Chicago. He got a vacation one summer and went by to see him and I guess that was the last time he ever saw him. I don't know what become of him. I don't know if he is still living or not. He would always find some kid that way to take up with. I don't know how it was with kids, he never did make over them or nothing but he would just wink at them or walk around and put his hand on them or rub them on the head or hand them a nickel or dime or something and just make them all crazy about him. But I don't know how he did it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Children really liked him?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. But he didn't make over them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Children always seemed to like him, then?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah. They did always. He was the leader in school. He was seeing after them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he enjoy the football? You say he didn't care a great deal about it.



MRS. PUSSER: No, he didn't care too much about it. He just as soon hand his suit in as not. He played because they asked him to and wanted him to. Yeah he was the best player they had.

DR. CRAWFORD: I guess he was one of the largest on the team, wasn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, just about it. There might have been another one or two just about as large. But he didn't care for anything like that. He just always rather be by himself.

DR. CRAWFORD: What else did he do in high school?

MRS. PUSSER: Well that's about all. Just that football and basketball. He worked in the store then after school when school would be out.

DR. CRAWFORD: He had started that several years before hadn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he started when he was fourteen. Well I asked him didn't he like to play ball. He said, "It's worth more to work in the store than it is to play ball". He'd rather do that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where is that store located?

MRS. PUSSER: It's where the city hall was. They built a new city hall. I don't know what they've got in that. They did have the library and city hall there but they've moved it. It's right across in front of Vince's Drug Store. That's where it was he worked back then.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was it, a little grocery?



MRS. PUSSER: It was a grocery and furniture. It was just a general store, a big store.

DR. CRAWFORD: What work did he do there?

MRS. PUSSER: Well he just did all of it, deliver feed, and deliver furniture, and just anything, any kind of work.

DR. CRAWFORD: He started working early then.

MRS. PUSSER: He said the reason his arms was so long--he always liked milk, he would keep milk sitting in the refrigerator up there and would go and drink him a glass of milk--and lifting them big heavy loads, he said made his arms grow. Might have been something to it. Then he said he would go across to the drug store and get him a milk shake.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did he work there, until he graduated?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, well he worked there about three years.

The last year he graduated he didn't work.

When he went on the pipeline he missed about three months there that he didn't work in the grocery store after school. He would go in after school and work. See then, they stayed open until after the show was over, about ten o'clock at night.

DR. CRAWFORD: They would do a little business then, wouldn't they?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah. They had a little, old theater here then and the show was over about ten o'clock.

The stores would stay open and now they close about six.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did he enjoy the work on the pipeline?



MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he liked it all right, I reckon. He never would say nothing about anything. It would have to be unusual good, or unusual bad for him to mention anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know how he felt about Oklahoma?

MRS. PUSSER: Never did hear him say. Never made no remarks about anything. It was going to have to be extra good or extra bad for him to tell you anything. When he was Sheriff, anything bad would have to happen, it would have to be real bad for him to or it had to be real funny, anything that way. Around you he never told what you done or what you said or anything. He never told what the other fellow done.

DR. CRAWFORD: He graduated from high school in what year.

MRS. PUSSER: '56.

DR. CRAWFORD: That would have been about in May, wasn't it?

MRS. PUSSER: Graduated in May and worked in the store up there until he joined the Marines in August and he stayed until November.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long had he been thinking about joining the Marines?

MRS. PUSSER: Ever since before he got out of school or joined in the service. He asked me one day would I sign up for him to go to the service. I told him when he graduated I would be there ready to sign it. But whenever he graduated I didn't have to sign, he was eighteen.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's right. He was able to go.

MRS. PUSSER: The Navy was after him and the Air Force and the Marines, and the Marines outtalked him.

And he went to the Marines.



DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know why he chose the Marines rather than one of the others.

MRS. PUSSER: Well they just outtalked the others. They was going to have him playing ball in it.

Just let them outtalk him. They was the ones that put up a big story to him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had he ever thought of being a soldier or Marine?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he had been wanting to get in the service. He said he would be glad when he got old enough to get in service. He didn't care what kind it was so he would have some clothes to fit him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he have trouble getting clothes to fit?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he just wanted them to look just "so so" on him. And he always thought Army or service clothes looked good on anybody.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well you know that's right, he could get them to fit him when he was in service, couldn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. He got his Marine suit and got to wear it home.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was in from August until November.

MRS. PUSSER: He come home in about a week and a half after that. He was in a car wreck and crushed three vertebrates in his back and had to stay in the hospital for thirty-nine days. Then he got out of the hospital and wore a brace for about six or eight weeks. And then he went to work for Shackelford's at Selmer. He told me he would like to work for Shackelford's and I went over there and asked them and they said, "Yeah, I need a hand". I told him, "They said if you would be over there in the



morning at eight o'clock". And he said, "Well I'll go but I'll not get there before eight and be standing around". He was afraid he was pushing himself on somebody. So he went on and--Mr. Haley was working over there then as boss and he said he was the best hand he ever had.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now let's see, in the Marine Corps he just went through training didn't he, I guess, came back for a visit--they get a furlough, I think.

MRS. PUSSER: No he didn't get a furlough. He got a discharge. He had asthma.

DR. CRAWFORD: Oh, he had not been home before.

MRS. PUSSER: No, see he stayed in the hospital six weeks, out of the twelve, had asthma.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he know that he had it before?

MRS. PUSSER: Well just a little bit. My daughter always had it and he would wheeze sometimes. I said to him once, "Are you going to have asthma like Gaylia?" And he said, "I don't know." He went to Nashville and they didn't catch it but they caught it the third day at Paris. He said if he had went West he would have went over like a top in the Air Force. He needed a high, dry place.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yeah, in another place that might not have given any trouble to him.

MRS. PUSSER: No, it wouldn't him but now my daughter, she could have went down to Paris Island and it would have been just fine for her.

DR. CRAWFORD: It doesn't trouble her?

MRS. PUSSER: No, it takes rain and damp weather for her,



Buford it didn't. It took high. Because when he was in Chicago he wasn't bothered with it none. See that was higher.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, let's see, he was in the hospital where, in Virginia?

MRS. PUSSER: No, he was in the hospital in Savannah. No, over in Memphis he come here and had the wreck after he got out of the Marines.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was dismissed because he had trouble with asthma?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh, come home with his discharge.

DR. CRAWFORD: He the wreck here and what hospital was he put in?

MRS. PUSSER: In the Baptist in Memphis, See, he and this friend of his went over to Memphis that day to see my daughter and coming back they had the wreck. Between here and Memphis over there by LaGrange, Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did it happen?

MRS. PUSSER: They run off the road and the car turned over and tore it up. And then they took him back to the hospital and he stayed over there thirty-nine days. He had it all fixed up going to come back to Savannah where he would have plenty of company and I wouldn't let him. The doctor told me he stay there or go home or go to Savannah and I told him he would stay right where he was. He cried a little bit but I think he was glad afterwards.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you think it was better for him to stay there?



MRS. PUSSER: Well the lady told me across the hall about him wanting to go. She said, "If he was a son of mine, he'd stay right there and I'd put 'Not Visitors' on the door." She says, "I've got an eighteen year old boy now that was hurt in a car wreck and he can't stoop over." They carried him home and she said the visitors came in and took the bed. He don't need no visitors. If I had it to go over with mine he'd stay there and they'd put 'No Visitors' on the door.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was Baptist hospital?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. This lady was from Kentucky that told me that.

DR. CRAWFORD: And it was a back injury that he had.

MRS. PUSSER: Uh Huh. And so he just got along fine with it.

DR. CRAWFORD: They really got him over it.

MRS. PUSSER: They didn't never put him in no cast.

They said he was such a good patient. He said the doctor came in and explained it to him that if he was to sit up that his back would do this and it would kill him like that. And he was afraid to raise up. He laid thirty-nine days without a pillow. Now Buford if he would get in a place to do that way he could lay down and stay with it. He come out of there just as straight. I told him, "You better lay straight or you're going to go around all humped over for all your life."



DR. CRAWFORD: That was a trial to stay in bed for thirty-nine days.

MRS. PUSSER: Without a pillow he didn't turn over and they put a brace on him and sent him home.

They brought him in on stretchers. He was laying down on stretchers and he got off the stretchers and got up and I said, "Buford." And he said, "I've got on a brace." And he wore that brace for six weeks. One morning I went off to work and I forgot to put his undershirt in there where it was. I would always go and bathe his back for him before I left every morning and I forgot to put his undershirt in there and he put his brace on and he got up and went and got his undershirt and then he went and laid back down and pulled his brace off and put his undershirt on and then put his brace back on. He was that particular until they told him to quit.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long was that he had to wear the brace?

MRS. PUSSER: He wore it until along about March. He just decided he didn't need it.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did he start his next job?

MRS. PUSSER: At Shackelford's Funeral Home.

DR. CRAWFORD: At which funeral home?

MRS. PUSSER: Shackelford's

DR. CRAWFORD: Shackelford's, yes.

MRS. PUSSER: But it was a man there by the name of Haley was the manager then. He's head now. And Buford went to work for him.

DR. CRAWFORD: You knew Mr. Haley?



MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you talked to him about getting Buford a job.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I just asked him if he needed somebody.

Buford wanted to work. And he said, "Yeah, tell him to come on over here in the morning." But you see he had the lowest job in there and he had to stay over there and he couldn't make enough for nothing you know. Was working all the time. He quit and worked on a pipeline about three or four weeks and one of his friends here in town, Ida Lou Morris, she quit the factory and she saw him up in town and said, "Let's go to Chicago". And he said, "All right." They knew Paul Wright that worked in the shoe factory in Chicago and they had lived here in town and she was friends to them and Buford knew the boy too and knew them too. So they left that night at midnight. Each one of them was doubting the other one to go. And they went to Chicago together and they went up there to Paul Wright's. Margie went with them, Margie Wright that's Mike Wright's mother. They was hunting a place and she said, "Let's go out here and see about this place." So they went out there to Union Bag and Elmer St. Johns was the manager there. They went around and she went with them now. They wouldn't have went by themselves.

DR. CRAWFORD: He worked how long at Shackelford's. He went to work about in March when he got out of the brace.

MRS. PUSSER: And worked until September.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was he doing over there?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, just whatever they wanted him to. Just

help embalm them and take them to funerals and work around the funeral home, just whatever the rest did.

DR. CRAWFORD: But he didn't stay over, he had to come back at night?

MRS. PUSSER: No, he couldn't he had to stay over there at Selmer.

DR. CRAWFORD: They need him on duty I guess.

MRS. PUSSER: He had to stay on duty.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he get weekends off?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, maybe he would get a weekend or a day through the week or something you know they would.

DR. CRAWFORD: He stayed there until September, was it?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Then he went to work on a pipeline?

MRS. PUSSER: He worked about three or four weeks and then in October he went to Chicago.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where was the pipeline then?

MRS. PUSSER: I don't know, it might have been down here in Alabama somewhere. He worked for some people around here. I just forgot where it was.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know they built a lot of different ones at different places.

MRS. PUSSER: But he didn't like it too much I don't think. And it was getting bad weather.

DR. CRAWFORD: They paid high wages sometimes.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah they did. But he went up here to Chicago then and he got on at that Union Bag and that was a good company. He made good there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now who was the friend that he met here that he went with?

MRS. PUSSER: It was Ida Lou Morris. He knew her. They had always gone to school together.

DR. CRAWFORD: Ida Lou Morris?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did she have a car or did he?

MRS. PUSSER: She is the one that had the car.

DR. CRAWFORD: And she wanted to go to Chicago.

MRS. PUSSER: And got him to go with her.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they just left. That was in October.

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. He said she drove until they go to Paducah, Kentucky and said she told him to drive and she went to sleep. And he drove until they got into the edge of Chicago and he woke her up and said, "This is your car and you're going to drive in Chicago". Hadn't either one of them ever drove in Chicago.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that would have been about '57.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah it was in October of '57.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he was about twenty years old then. And they found this friend and from there they were able to find a place and go to work at Union Bag.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah. They went up there and went to Paul Wright. I remember Buford laughing. He said

she turned around in the middle of the street. He said he thought the law would get them but nobody never did bother them. They knew what street to go to but didn't know where it was. They'd never been in Chicago.

DR. CRAWFORD: But they finally found it.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah they found it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Paul Wright's address.

MRS. PUSSER: He lived on Pulaski Road. They found it and got to the house.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now where was it that Buford stayed up there?

MRS. PUSSER: He stayed with Paul and Margie Wright for a year or so up there. And then he got out.

John Howard went up there, my other son. And they got them an apartment then and lived in it then.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did he work at Union Bag?

MRS. PUSSER: He worked from '57 to '61.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did he like Chicago?

MRS. PUSSER: I don't think he liked it much. He just always wanted to be at home.

DR. CRAWFORD: You know he did like to be home and he did like things quiet and orderly, didn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: It was just too big a town.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he do while he was up there besides work?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, I guess they just went every night.

I imagine they took in all of Chicago to see what was going on. I heard Margie tell about it one time. Said they would come in and you could hear them just talking and laughing. They would go to



these different shows, I reckon. Said she heard them laughing one night. Said she reckon they would get more kicks out of watching the people than they did the show. Said they was laughing about one old woman and her dog. They would go around, you know, to different places to see how it was. And she said she reckon they got more kick out of that than anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was it good work that he was doing at Union Bag?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was he doing there?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, he run a dye cutter and just different things.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now let's see, he was there about four years. And then he just got tired of working up there.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he and Pauline married in '59 and they come back here in '61. They just wanted to come back. And he come back down here not knowing what he was going to do. But he went and took some wrestling up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Took some wrestling lessons?

MRS. PUSSER: I said he took that to have an excuse to come home and wrestle but he didn't wrestle very much when he got down here. He went a few trips to Jackson. He went to work over here in a store for Bob Vinson at Hickory Flat. He moved over there and lived about a year or a part of a year. He worked about two or three months for Bob. Then Carl was going to go back and be police again and he gave him his job. That is how he started in law enforcement.

DR. CRAWFORD: O.K. Now where did he meet Pauline?

MRS. PUSSER: In Chicago.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was her name then?

MRS. PUSSER: Mullins. She married a Vance and they was separated. She had two children. They had been separated ever since the little boy was six months old, I think. And he was six years old.

DR. CRAWFORD: Pauline Mullins?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. She was from Haysi, Virginia.

DR. CRAWFORD: She had never been around here before, I suppose.

MRS. PUSSER: No, she never had been down here.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why had she gone to Chicago, to work too?

MRS. PUSSER: Just to get a job, like people went out hunting jobs. Well, her and her first husband went up there first. And she stayed.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did Buford happen to meet her? Did they work together?

MRS. PUSSER: I don't know, they just met there somewhere. I never did just hear him say. Met her out somewhere.

DR. CRAWFORD: And was it love at first sight? Did they get married right away?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, he knew her a right smart while, I think before they got married. I don't just know how long.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they were married in '59?



MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: He would have been about 22 years old then?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he was 22 when they married. Then they come back down here and he got him a trailer and moved in the yard. He stayed there that year and then we moved over on.....

DR. CRAWFORD: You were in Adamsville?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, we lived in Adamsville. He come back from Chicago to Adamsville. He didn't come back to no big, white farm like the movie shows you.

DR. CRAWFORD: I remember what it showed there.

MRS. PUSSER: Well we didn't have that.

DR. CRAWFORD: You lived in town and not on the farm they showed in the movie?

MRS. PUSSER: No. Right up here in Adamsville on Baptist Street is where he come back to.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember the house number?

MRS. PUSSER: No, we didn't have it numbered I don't think.

It was back up here on Baptist Street. It's that block house. We had lived over here from '51 till, then we moved over on Twenty-two and stayed a year and come back and bought the house we lived in just right down below where we lived all the time for thirteen years here in Adamsville.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that is what he came back to.

MRS. PUSSER: When we moved over on Twenty-two, he moved his trailer over there in the yard. And when we moved back over on Baptist Street right down below where we moved from and bought that house. He bought over here on 64 Highway where this used car lot is right at the back of here. I mean he moved there and lived four or

five months and then bought here where he lived. Here is where he lived in '64 before he was ever elected Sheriff.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well now let's see, when he came back they came back with the trailer and how many children were born then.

MRS. PUSSER: Now when he come back they didn't come back there, they came back in the car and just bought the little, old U-Haul trailer you know to come back. And he moved in the house at Hickory Flat but he bought him a trailer and moved in it and moved the trailer in my yard after that. But he sold his trailer then and rented the house over here where it's this used car lot now. And then he bought right here where he lived in '64 in April. And he lived here until he died. But the house that he lived in when they bought here when Pauline was living burned in 1971. They left from right along here [about here] that morning. I guess right along here is about where they left out from.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now let's see, how many children were with them when they came back from Chicago?

MRS. PUSSER: Three. Dwana was six months old.

DR. CRAWFORD: Dwana had just been born and the two children she had before. What were their names?

MRS. PUSSER: Dianne and Mike Vance.

DR. CRAWFORD: Which was the older?

MRS. PUSSER: Dianne. She was the oldest. She was four years older than the boy.

DR. CRAWFORD: About how old was he when they came back?

MRS. PUSSER: Six.



DR. CRAWFORD: She would have been then about. . .

MRS. PUSSER: Ten.

DR. CRAWFORD: Ten, uh huh. Six and ten and Dwana just six months.

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you know they were coming?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, they told me they was going to come back. He come down here in May looking around. I knew he was going to come back.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you glad they were going to come?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I was glad they come, but I didn't want him to quit that good job.

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh huh. I know what you mean.

MRS. PUSSER: I thought he ought to stay with it because he could have went on to the top. He could have been manager over the plant. Elmer St. John thought the world of him. He's in New York now. The one that hired him that night when he went out to the plant. Margie Wright said he talked to him and looked at him and says, "Well I'll just hire him and if nothing else I'll use him for a bodyguard" Just when he talked to him, he hired him right now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well they decided to come back though.

MRS. PUSSER: Carl gave him his job of police and he lived right here and he was police here in town for two years.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year did he go to work as police now-- in '62?

MRS. PUSSER: '62.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what time of the year?

MRS. PUSSER: I believe it was along about maybe March or somewhere along there. Spring-like of the year.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Carl had been the Chief of Police or one of the policemen here?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he had been the police. They didn't have but one back then.

DR. CRAWFORD: City policeman, uh huh.

MRS. PUSSER: Well, they have two part of the time and then he got his hip hurt and they were needing another police so Buford took it. And I think he was the only police they had here maybe for a year or two. Then they had another one. I think it was the alcohol-beverage committee men got acquainted with him coming down here hunting stills and got to talking to him about running for Sheriff.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had they had many stills in this area?

MRS. PUSSER: Well, they caught one down here below town. There was several over the county I imagine.

And got him talked, to run for Sheriff just like they did to play ball. That's how come he started out in the Sheriff's office.

DR. CRAWFORD: People had to think of things for him to do. But he would go through and do them then.

He was on the Police force here, City policeman two years. Was he the only one when he took over?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, I think he was the only one they had.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they hire another one before he had left?

MRS. PUSSER: I just don't remember. They might have. But then he was Police here in town, I guess they had two then I forgot. It's been so long. But that was in '64.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he on call about all of the time?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, he would get up and start maybe after twelve and stay until after night. He'd do his sleeping in the morning. When he worked in Chicago he worked on a night shift. He went to work at three and didn't get in--and he said around ten-o'clock in the morning.

DR. CRAWFORD: So he would sleep up until around noon or so.

MRS. PUSSER: If you wanted to aggravate him, wake him up about eight or nine o'clock in the morning.

DR. CRAWFORD: He didn't like to get called out of bed did he?

MRS. PUSSER: Not at seven or eight. Seven or eight o'clock he was just dead to the world.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was Adamsville about the size it is now when he was Sheriff? Has it grown much?

MRS. PUSSER: It has grown some, these suburbs around here. They've got several more houses.

DR. CRAWFORD: But not much. Well, did he have any especially difficult cases. Did he have any trouble while he was on the city police?

MRS. PUSSER: No they didn't have no trouble.

DR. CRAWFORD: No violence or assaults or anything like that?

MRS. PUSSER: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was very quiet then.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, it was quiet. Oh maybe sometime somebody would be drinking or something and when he was Sheriff they wanted to buy him out down here on the State line and he wouldn't sell out and that was the trouble. They offered him a thousand a month to turn his head. He treated everybody equal.

DR. CRAWFORD: I guess they had paid some people before.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, they would just always pay off. And then there was this lady, she called Carl up, see he went to be the jailer. See the day he went in the Sheriff's office he got his daddy to go over and keep the jail until he could find one and he stayed there six years. And the movie has got it a saw mill.

DR. CRAWFORD: But his daddy was really the jailer over here.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, they ought to have put that in the movie instead of saw mill.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I'm glad we got that for the record here.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, see he kept the jail and he fixed the prisoners supper and stayed over there at night and answered the phone and got their breakfast. And Pauline would go every morning, get over there about nine and cook the dinner for the prisoners and answer the telephone and kept Buford's books for him. Carl would come home, I was working at the factory.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did Buford not like the bookkeeping?

MRS. PUSSER: No, he never did keep no books or nothing.

He never would go to the mailbox to open his mail and want me to read it for him and tell him what it was. He just never was no hand for anything like that. Whenever Pauline got killed they got

T. W. Burks to stay up there in the day time and Carl still stayed at night. It was her place but I took the work fixing out the monthly report, Buford's secretary work. Fix out his board and meal every month. I'd work at the factory and got off at the factory at four o'clock and went to Selmer to fix up an \$800 board meal by eight o'clock and take Dwana with me.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, was the city generally pleased with his work as city policeman here.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, they all liked him. He might have had a few that didn't like him, there's always a few but I don't reckon he really had any enemies here in town.

DR. CRAWFORD: He could have stayed on then but he had met these people from the Alcoholic-Beverage Commission when they were looking for stills and they wanted him to run for sheriff.

MRS. PUSSER: They got after him to run and some more people, I don't know who got to talking to him, and just talked him in a notion.

DR. CRAWFORD: So he filed for Sheriff in the election of '64. Now who was he running against, Mrs. Pusser?

MRS. PUSSER: James Dickey and a Weatherford man. He came out independent. Him and Buford were Republicans. So Buford beat him in the committee.

DR. CRAWFORD: So there were two Republicans, Buford Pusser and James Weatherford.

MRS. PUSSER: I forgot, I believe it was George Weatherford. It was a Weatherford, I forgot.

DR. CRAWFORD: And the Republican committee selected one of them to run.

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, and Buford got the most votes . And then

Weatherford come out Independent. And that made three running.

DR. CRAWFORD: So when Weatherford didn't make it as a Republican he came out Independent.

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. And so that put James Dickey, he was a Democrat and two Republicans. And then Dickey got killed in a car wreck about two or three weeks before the election.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did that happen?

MRS. PUSSER: Nobody knows. They just found him run off the road. I don't know how long it had been.

DR. CRAWFORD: What part of the county was that in?

MRS. PUSSER: Down in the south part toward the state line. Somewhere down there I just don't know what road it was on whether it was the main 45 or which road. And you see if Dickey hadn't got killed Buford might not have been elected because you see the Republican vote would have been split.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, between Buford and Weatherford.

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh. But after Dickey got killed, Buford beat.

DR. CRAWFORD: So he was elected. Was it by a large margin?

MRS. PUSSER: No, not too big a margin.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, the county is sort of split Republican and Democrat, isn't it?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah, now back years ago, I'll say thirty or forty years ago a Democrat didn't have a chance in McNairy County.

DR. CRAWFORD: But it has changed some. I guess it's about even now.



MRS. PUSSER: It's about even now. Well, you take back;
well Tennessee is a Democratic state. There's
never been but about four Republican governors since Tennessee has been a
state. Not over four or five.

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe it is four exactly.

MRS. PUSSER: I think four is all it is.

DR. CRAWFORD: Maybe five before this year is over but about
four so far.

MRS. PUSSER: See it is a Democratic state but people are
beginning to vote like they want to not for
the party. When I was going to school I had a question. I used to think
you had to, well as a kid especially after World War I everybody was really
strong either Democrat or Republican. And so I was sitting around listening
one day they didn't even know it--a kid can things--so I heard how the
Republicans slip and do their crooked work. They told anybody that didn't
know how to vote to mark the vote, take them in these little booths and if
you'd slip and not mark it and slip and give it to this one that didn't know
how to vote, couldn't read and write you know, and they said they didn't
know how the Democrat plan is. They've got one some other way.

So it's been crooked all the way down. Nixon ain't the only one that's
Watergated.

DR. CRAWFORD: No. Well, he didn't invent it.

MRS. PUSSER: No, it's been going.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, McNairy County has had it's share I
suppose.

MRS. PUSSER: A Democrat didn't have hardly a chance in



McNairy County until the last few years.

Then Republicans haven't had a chance in the state ever, hardly ever, about four times. The United States used to be Republican but it is getting about as much Democrat now as it is Republican.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now James Dickey though, the Sheriff here was Republican. No, he was Democrat.

MRS. PUSSER: He was the Democrat. Buford was Republican.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did Buford get along with him? I know the movie showed they weren't on friendly terms.

MRS. PUSSER: Well they was all right. They didn't have anything against each other. That just made me mad to see such as that in the movie.

DR. CRAWFORD: There was no quarrel between the two of them. They never had any hard words so far as you know.

MRS. PUSSER: They liked each other.

DR. CRAWFORD: The movie was mistaken then.

MRS. PUSSER: He liked all the Dickeys'. His brother was one of the police in Selmer when Buford was Sheriff. And he was always up there in the Sheriff's office. Come up there and eat and just had a big time together. They thought the world of Dickey. And Buford and the Dickey boys in town was always friends. He growed up with them. I don't know why they put such as that. . .

DR. CRAWFORD: Were they related to James Dickey?

MRS. PUSSER: Uh huh, he was their uncle.

DR. CRAWFORD: I don't know why movies do things like that.



MRS. PUSSER: They done that and just made it look awful.

I know Buford didn't like it. It hurt him.

But they done had it made and you don't know what they are putting in a movie when you see them film it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know why he wanted to run for sheriff?

MRS. PUSSER: Because they asked him to.

DR. CRAWFORD: You don't think it really had much to do with his being in the fight down by the state line.

MRS. PUSSER: No it wasn't that. It was just because they insisted that he got in. Maybe he decided being a police after he got to working in it, he liked the work. Work with people.

DR. CRAWFORD: And he did like being a policeman, didn't he?

MRS. PUSSER: Yeah he liked being a policeman and he liked being with the kids and the young folks. He would get out and have a good time with them. And he had a bigger time than anybody on Halloween when he was Sheriff. Had some boys laughing one time- they said they was going to throw eggs. Got them a case of eggs and was waiting for cars to come along. The first car that came along was Buford. Said he stepped out and never said a word. He just had them to step aside. He reached down and picked up a case of eggs. He says the prisoners will enjoy these for breakfast and the ones that claim them will help them eat them, and he got in his car and drove off. Just laughing to himself about what he pulled on them. He was just all over the county like that. It just tickled him to death to catch them. And they couldn't do nothing but laugh. And then they would all get out and laugh about it the next day.



